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Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a summary of the components of quality programs in the visual and performing arts. To achieve quality learning, schools must provide students with a variety of essential resources which collectively offer those students an "opportunity to learn." Many of the specific resources for quality arts programs, such as facilities and equipment, differ from those required for any other program in the school, and also vary considerably from one arts discipline to another.

Substantial and frequent instruction by knowledgeable teachers is the most essential condition for student learning in any art form. Districts should strive always to provide the balanced curriculum of which arts instruction is an essential component.

An excellent, more specific description of the staffing, facilities, equipment, materials, leadership and other resources necessary for quality instruction in each art form is found in the national document, *Opportunity-to-Learn Standards for Arts Education*.¹ More detailed guidelines for facilities and other helpful information are available from the professional arts education organizations.²

EFFECTIVE PROGRAM COMPONENTS

For purposes of this program development guide, components of effective arts programs are presented in 12 separate categories, ranging from curriculum and class size to instructional technology and student assessment.

Curriculum

High-quality programs in dance, music, theatre and the visual arts are defined, guided and supported by a comprehensive written curriculum. A quality curriculum, however, is more than a document. It is an integrated system for ensuring quality student learning. The curriculum ensures not only that there is a quality plan for what students should learn, but also that there is close alignment between the planned curriculum, what teachers deliver through their instruction and what students actually learn. Effective curriculums, therefore, include not only a written guide, but also appropriate processes for teaching, assessing and improving the program outlined in the guide.

The traditional written curriculum guide plays an important role by presenting in words and visual images (charts, diagrams) the design for the overall instructional

program, including what students should know and be able to do. A developmentally appropriate curriculum that is consistent with the vision outlined in Connecticut's arts program goals and standards should provide for the breadth and depth of arts learning children need; taking into account not only their intellectual needs, but social, emotional and physical needs as well.

Having an appropriate design, however, is only the initial step toward quality learning. Equally important are the implementation of the design through effective instruction; assessment of student learning to determine how successful the instruction has been; and an ongoing process of improving all aspects of the program, including instruction, materials, other resources, assessment and the guide itself. Collectively, all of these elements must work together to provide students with a quality arts program.

Curriculum guides of the near future will reflect society's trend toward multimedia presentation. In keeping with the axiom that a picture is worth a thousand words, and recognizing that both teachers and students learn best when concepts are presented in a variety of media and experienced through a variety of senses, these guides will include video and audio components, such as examples of quality student work and effective instructional strategies. (See the Middletown, Conn. *Guide for Arts Education, K-12*.) Such multimedia components will be particularly important in the arts, where much of students' most important work is nonverbal.

The curriculum guide should, at the very least, include:

- either a philosophy of education in each art form or a philosophy of arts education in general;
- overarching goals that guide the entire K-12 program;
- corresponding objectives or outcomes that evolve sequentially from grade to grade and course to course, K-12;
- assessment strategies for evaluating student achievement; and
- the assumptions about instructional time, materials, equipment and facilities on which the objectives are based.

Other desirable components of a guide include:

- suggested teaching strategies; and
- suggested classroom assessment strategies.

Successful implementation of the program outlined in the curriculum will depend on providing the other resources and professional development outlined later in this chapter.

Detailed guidance in using Connecticut's arts program goals and standards to develop a local curriculum is provided in Chapter 4.

Expert Faculty

Quality arts learning is the result of instruction by expert arts teachers, coordinated with and supported by the work of other teachers. While some students have such extraordinary talents that they flourish in spite of their instruction, for the vast majority of students the only route to high achievement is skilled instruction. The successful arts teacher is both an artist and an educator, possessing a high degree of physical skill and understandings/knowledge. Students learn most subjects best by doing, and the four arts are certainly no exception: to learn an art form students need to study with teachers who not only understand, but can also model, teach and evaluate the performance and creation of the specific form.

Students' learning in the arts depends on substantive opportunities for instruction by teachers who are experts in those subjects. Certified specialist teachers play a significant role in helping students master the arts, both as providers of instruction and as expert partners with other teachers who incorporate the arts into their teaching. In the section titled Instructional Connections, there is further discussion of the roles of specialists and classroom teachers in delivering arts instruction.

In Connecticut, teachers certified in art and music deliver the majority of instruction in the arts, partner with classroom teachers to teach about the arts, and assist classroom teachers in teaching through the arts. Dance and theatre instruction are provided in a variety of ways. Suggestions for developing dance and theatre programs may be found in the section of Chapter 5 titled "Introducing Dance and Theatre Into the Curriculum."

Art and music teachers receive intensive teacher preparation in their specialty areas. Art and music teachers typically complete at least 60 credit hours of university work in their major prior to graduation, whereas most subject-area teachers complete half that amount or even less. Teaching in an arts area not only requires a wide range of understandings about the art form (historical, critical, aural, notational, technical, pedagogical), but also a wide variety of specialized physical skills (performance technique, conducting, use of visual arts tools and media, piano accompaniment).

In fact, although art and music teachers in Connecticut are officially certified to teach in all grades, PK-12, administrators should bear in mind when assigning teachers to particular classes that each level and type of class requires a specific set of skills that not all certi-

fied arts teachers will possess. Particularly in music, where a high level of specialized skill is required for each subspecialty (elementary general music, band/winds, orchestra/strings, choir, guitar, keyboard), most teachers are prepared to deliver quality instruction in only one or two areas. Adding the skills and knowledge needed to teach in another area typically requires months or even years of study, such as through evening and summer graduate work and practice; few if any can be mastered solely through in-service workshops.

Standards describing what art and music teachers should know and be able to do have been developed as part of Connecticut's Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) Program, and published in *Connecticut's Common Core of Teaching* (1999; see Appendix J). Administrators seeking guidelines for hiring, supervising and evaluating art and music faculty members may wish to refer to these standards. University preservice teacher training programs can use these standards as a guide toward program design and improvement.

Instructional Time

Substantial and frequent instruction by knowledgeable teachers is the most essential condition for student learning in any art form. Regular reinforcement of arts learning is essential for student progress. Scheduling models in which students receive only a single lesson in an art form over a period of four or more days are highly inefficient, because the learning that occurs during one class is often forgotten by the time the next class occurs. Such problems are further compounded by holidays, field trips and other interruptions, which may cause gaps of two or more weeks between lessons. To sustain student learning and make it possible to achieve the arts standards, **all students should receive instruction at least twice weekly during Grades K-8 in each art form.**

Students should develop broad understanding and skill in all four arts disciplines during Grades K-8, and pursue at least one art form in depth at the high school level. Research suggests that substantial arts experience and instruction in the earliest years of life, continuing on through the primary grades, is essential for students to develop their potential. The middle school level plays a particularly important role in students' arts learning because, in most districts, required study of most art forms ends in eighth grade. The high school level provides an opportunity for students to pursue study in the arts area(s) in which they have a special interest, to prepare themselves for a lifetime of active involvement in that art form. Ideally, every high school student should be required to pursue at least two years of sequential study in one art form.

The following amounts of arts instructional time at specific grade levels are recommended by the Connecticut State Department of Education – and by national experts – to help students achieve the high level of learning *in* and *about* the arts called for in the Connecticut and national standards:

| | Connecticut Recommendations ³ | National Opportunity-to-Learn Standards ⁴ |
|---|--|---|
| Elementary School Instructional Time | 60-100 minutes per week each of art and music; 30-60 minutes per week each of dance and theatre | 90 minutes per week in each art form (dance, music, theatre and the visual arts) |
| Middle School Instructional Time | 1 semester (90 classes) per year in each art form (dance, music, theatre and the visual arts) | 1 semester (90 classes) per year in each art form (dance, music, theatre and the visual arts) |
| High School Instructional Time | At least 2 years (credits) of study in at least 1 arts area | At least 2 years of study in at least 1 arts area |

As described in the section titled Instructional Connections, non-arts teachers can play an important role in delivering instruction *about* the arts, and – in cases where those teachers have specific arts training – they can reinforce learning *in* the arts. Learning *through* the arts often is very effective in helping students master non-arts objectives, but should not be counted toward the recommended times listed because it does not contribute to students' mastery of arts objectives.

Scheduling

Arts instructional time must be scheduled appropriately to make efficient use of available time, maximize the achievement of students enrolled in arts classes and – particularly at the high school level – to provide all students with access to arts instruction.

There is no single best scheduling system that will serve the needs of all schools. The best scheduling system for a particular school depends on factors such as student population, curriculum and structure. There are, however, four general scheduling principles common to quality arts programs:

1. The school scheduling matrix must provide enough instructional time for students to achieve excellence in arts classes.

2. Scheduling for arts teachers should permit them to provide quality instruction and to participate fully in the programs and culture of the school.
3. All students should master a central core of arts content and processes in each of the four arts during Grades K-8.
4. All students should have an opportunity to develop significant depth of learning in at least one art form through participation in a strand of instruction (e.g., choir, modern dance, acting, studio art) that continues into high school.

Many arts classes benefit from longer time periods because of the need to set up supplies and equipment before class and clean up afterward (visual arts, and often music and theatre), warm up prior to instruction (dance, music and theatre performance), and change into appropriate clothing (dancers, sometimes visual artists and actors). It is, for example, very inefficient for most upper-grade art studio, theatre or music ensemble classes to meet for less than 45 minutes, and at the high school level these classes make more efficient use of time when lessons are at least 50 minutes in length. On the other hand, students make more rapid progress in skills-intensive classes such as music and dance when they meet at least twice – and, preferably,

three or more times – per week. Therefore, it may be that elementary schools which offer only 60 minutes per week each of art and music may, in Grades 4-6, appropriately decide to offer music twice weekly for 30 minutes, but art once weekly for 60 minutes. In schools which meet the national recommendation of 90 minutes of instruction per week in each of the four arts disciplines, dance and music each might meet three times per week for 30 minutes, and art and theatre twice weekly for 45 minutes.

Ensemble classes should be available to all interested students, but not replace or limit the time they spend in general music. Quality instrumental music instruction requires small-group or individual lessons, beginning in elementary school and continuing through senior high school. Such smaller groupings balance the large class sizes common in bands and orchestras, enabling teachers to provide each student with the attention necessary to cope with the extreme differences in technique between the various instruments of the band and orchestra that they cannot provide in a large heterogeneous ensemble rehearsal. Schools that do not provide small group lessons to students also create inequities among students based on their socioeconomic status because, in such schools, only students who have the money to pay for private lessons receive quality instruction. Schools that turn to before- and after-school rehearsals for ensemble classes or lessons exclude students who lack transportation.

Similarly, middle and high schools should provide instructional time during the school day for learning theatre. The extracurricular “drama club” or annual musical production are not replacements for sequential theatre courses, nor do they provide adequate opportunities for play rehearsal.

Arts classes at the middle school are unique, in that art and music typically are the only core subjects in which required instruction ends after middle school. For this reason, it is particularly important to provide substantial arts instructional time during the middle grades, thereby providing an opportunity to round out each student’s education in those areas. Connecticut and national opportunity-to-learn documents recommend one half-year (approximately 90 class periods) of instruction in art and music for every student as part of his or her general education. Schools that truly embrace the child-centered philosophy of the middle school movement will provide students with time to achieve excellence in the arts (see scheduling principle #1), and will avoid allocating smaller and smaller amounts of time to the arts as more subjects are added to the curriculum. Students who experience excellence in the arts will be more likely to continue their involvement at the high school level.

Secondary schools should provide scheduling systems that permit students to elect a full array of

courses, including the arts, and guidance counseling that encourages them to elect arts courses. College-bound students who wish to study the arts often are prevented from doing so by scheduling conflicts, stymied by the impossibility of fitting a full load of college preparatory courses into school schedules that fail to provide adequate time for a balanced education. Many secondary-level students miss out on the benefits of arts study because their guidance counselors fail to recognize the importance of arts courses as preparation for college and for a rewarding life. Students who do not plan to attend college too often are encouraged to elect prevocational courses instead of, rather than in addition to, arts courses.

To guarantee that all high school students achieve depth of learning in at least one art form, community leaders should ensure that all high school students study the arts. They can accomplish this by enacting graduation requirements, by providing school schedules that permit students to elect arts courses (typically systems that allow students to take at least seven, and preferably eight, courses per year), and through guidance counselors who encourage arts study.

Schools also should pay careful attention to the way they schedule arts faculty members. Due to the nature of the arts and the fact that arts teachers typically teach classes at more than one grade level, arts teachers use a wider array of materials and equipment than most other teachers. It is, therefore, important to build schedules that provide the teachers with transition time between classes to reset their rooms, and – in buildings with inadequate arts facilities – additional time to move from one classroom to another. Such transition time should not be counted as teachers’ daily planning time, but rather an accommodation to the fact that they are dealing with widely varied student populations. For these reasons, it is most efficient to schedule arts educators who teach multiple classes at different grade levels so that they teach the same grade in succession – i.e., their three classes of fourth graders in a row, then their two classes of first graders – rather than constantly changing back and forth between grade levels.

Districts that value interdisciplinary instruction should supplement teachers’ normal planning time with additional time for arts teachers to meet with their colleagues to plan interdisciplinary experiences. If districts want arts faculty members to devote time to teaching other subjects through the arts, they should provide arts instructional time beyond the basic level required for teaching the arts curriculum. For example, if elementary students need 80 minutes per week of art instruction to master the art curriculum, then an additional 20 minutes per week might be provided to use art as the stimulus for supplemental reading and writing activities to further the specific objectives of the language arts curriculum.